

Bad \$20 bill lacks lifelike president

By Roger Boye

This week's column answers questions about an always-popular collectible, paper money.

Q—A fast-food restaurant refused to take my \$20 bill, claiming that it was counterfeit. How should I check for a forgery? Who takes the loss for a bad bill?

N.C., Wheaton

A—Compare the suspect with a genuine \$20 note. Among other things, the portrait of Andrew Jackson should appear lifelike and distinct from the background. Also, look for the tiny red and blue fibers embedded in all paper used to make U.S. Federal Reserve notes.

If you are still in doubt, show the bill to a banker. If your money is counterfeit, you are out \$20.

Q—We own several U.S. silver certificates that say in large letters, "One dollar in silver payable to the bearer on demand." Where can we get our silver?

H.J., Elmhurst

A—Since June 24, 1968, Uncle Sam has refused to exchange silver certificates for silver bullion, although the bills are legal tender.

Q—Is Confederate currency worth big money? We own six \$50 bills and a \$1 bill, all dated in the early 1860s.

W.R., Chicago

Q—Authentic specimens often retail for \$5 to \$100 (or more), depending on type and condition. I'll evaluate your hoard if you send me a copy of each bill and a self-addressed, stamped envelope.

Worthless imitations far outnumber genuine Confederate notes. Most hobby experts can detect the fakes, even those printed on crinkled, yellowed paper to appear old.

Q—While in the Philippines at the end of World War II, my father found several 5- and 10-peso notes. All include the words "The Japanese Government." Where should we go to exchange these bills for U.S. dollars?

E.V., Chicago

A—Sorry, but money issued for the Philippines during the Japanese occupation has no monetary value today. Also, the bills you describe are worth little to collectors because they were printed in huge quantities.